CHIEF MAN-EATER

By Rev. W. D. Westervelt in Paradise of the Pacific.

Chief Maneater, the cannibal, lived in the Hawaiian Islands. He was also one of the inhabitants of mist land. Legends gathered around him like clouds. Facts also stood out like tall trees through the clouds. He was a real cannibal of whom the Hawaiians are not proud.

The Hawaiians have frequently been called cannibals. Secretaries of the Missionary Board under which the first missionaries came to Hawaii, and papers of the denomination supporting that mission have uttered the untruth, "The cannibals of the Sandwich Islands would erewhile cook and carve a merchant or marine and discourse on the deliciousness of cold missionary." It was a very forcible background against which to paint moral improvement, but it was not accurate. The Hawaiians claim that they never practiced cannibalism. If anything like a feast of human flesh was partaken of it was only in exceedingly rare and obscure cases. And of these, only "Chief Maneater" is accepted as an historical fact. Legends that possibly have had a hint of cannibalism are very few.

It is recorded that after certain fierce battles of the long ago as a method of showing indignity of dead chiefs their bodies were baked and thrown into the sea.

It is barely possible that the baking was followed by cannibalism, but there is nothing in the record beyond the suggestion of a suspicion.

The daring act of "heart eating" is mentioned in Hawaiian annals. This came during, or after, a battle, when two warriors had been engaged in a hand to hand struggle. The victor, whose strength was almost gone, would sometimes tear out the heart of the dying opponent and eat it on the spot. It was believed that the strength and courage of the dead entered immediately into the living.

That the Hawaiian chiefs and priests set small value upon life is well attested by the large number of human sacrifices required for almost all civil and religious ceremonies. For instance, when the famous war god Kaili was taken to a temple dedicated to it by Kamehameha eleven human victims were placed at once upon the altar before it. When a chief desired a new canoe a man was usually slain at the foot of the tree from which the canoe was to be made. Another was slain when the canoe was complete, and others might be sacrificed at different stages of the work. When a chief's house was to be erected, sometimes a victim was sacrificed and buried at each corner and when the house was completed another slaughter occurred. When an idol was to be made substantially the same sacrifices accompanied the ceremony of choosing the tree and carving the image. At certain times the priests of all the temples demanded human victims, and regularly appointed officers, or mancatchers, were appointed to provide for the sacrifice. These spared not even their own relatives in their search. Women were almost always exempt from this horrible termination of life. When a battle had been fought many captives were sacrificed by both victor and vanquished.

Infanticide was freely practiced up to the time of the advent of the missionaries. Even for old people there was often but little love, and the aged and the infirm were left to care for themselves, or placed on the beach for the outstretched hands of the incoming tide.

A native historian says: "The ancient restrictions of chiefs and priests were like the poisoned tooth of a reptile. If the shadow of a common man fell on a chief, it was death. If put on any part of the garments of a chief, it was death. If he went into the chief's yard or upon the chief's house, it was death. If he stood when the king's bathing water or his garments were carried along or in the king's presence, it was death. If he stood at the mention of the king's name in song, it was death. There were many other offences of the people which were made capital by the chiefs. The king and the priests were much alike. The priesthood was oppressive to the people. Human victims were required on many occasions. It tabus were violated it meant death. It was death to be found in a canoe on a tabu or sacred day. If a woman ate pork, cocoanuts, bananas or certain kind of fish or lobster it was death."

This much, and more, of human cruelty is acknowledged concerning the savage life of ancient Hawaii. Nevertheless from the beginning of the earliest acquaintance of white people with the Hawaiian not an instance or hint of cannibalism has been known.

The idea of eating human flesh was thoroughly repugnant. Alexander, in his brief history of the Hawaiian people, says: "Cannibalism was regarded with horror and detestation." Isaac Davis, one of the first white men to make his home in the islands, declared "the Hawaiians had never been cannibals since the islands were inhabited."

To the Hawaiian "Chief Maneater" was the unique and horrid embodiment of an insane appetite. He was the "Fe-fo-fi-fum" giant of the Hawaiian nursery. The very thought of his worse than brutal feast made the Hawaiian blood run cold.

One of the legends of Ke-alii-ai Kanaka—the chief-eating men—tells of the sudden appearance on the island of Kauai in the indefinite past, of a stranger chief from a foreign land, with a small band of followers. The king of Kauai made them welcome. Feasts and games were enjoyed; then came the discovery that secret feasts of a horrible nature were eaten by the strangers. They were driven from the island. They crossed the channel to Oahu. They knew their reputation would soon follow them, so they went inland to the lofty range of the Waianae mountains. Here they established their home, cultivated food and captured human victims, until finally driven out. Then they launched their boats and sailed away toward Kahiki, a foreign land.

Ai-Kanaka, Maneater, was the name given to a bay on the island of Molokai, now known as the leper island. Here dwelt the priest Kawalo, who, by the aid of the great shark god, Kauhuhu, brought upon his enemies a storm, which swept them into the sea, where they were eaten by the subjects and companions of the shark god.

A legend, or, rather, a genealogy, placed a "Chief Man eater" on the island of Hawaii, but no hints are given of man-eating feats, or of journeys to other islands, and the name may simply refer to a fierce disposition. The Oahu chief, Ke-alii-ai Kanaka, lived sometime about the middle of the eighteenth century, as nearly as can be estimated. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century the accounts of Chief Maneater's deeds and the accurate knowledge of his place of residence were quite fresh in the minds of old Hawaiians.

It is still an undecided problem whether "Chief Maneater" was a foreigner or an Hawaiian. The difficulty that makes his foreign birth a problem is the accepted date of the close of all intercourse with far-away island groups, such as Samoa and Fiji—at least three hundred years earlier than the century assigned to Ke-alii-ai Kanaka.

It would seem best to accept the legend that that degenerate chief was a desperado and an outcast from the high chief family of Waialua, on the northwest coast of Oahu.

Ke-alii-ai Kanaka was a powerful man. He is described as a champion boxer and wrestler. In some way he learned to love the taste of human flesh. When his awful appetite became known he was driven from his home. As he passed through the village the women who had been his playmates and companions fled from him. His former friends, the young warriors, called out "Maneater," "Maneater," and openly despised him. In bitter anger he called the few servants who would follow him and fled to the royal Waianae mountains. Driven from his kindred and friends, he buried himself and his brutal appetite in the mountain forests.

It is possible that soon after this he visited the island Kauai, and there passed himself off as a chief from a foreign land. But "his hand was against every man," and therefore "every man's hand was against him." Finally he made his permanent home among the Waianae mountains, in the range that borders Waialua.

His followers numbered only a handful, for a single canoe brought them away from Kauai—if his was indeed the band driven from the hospitable shores of that fertile island.

Kokoa and Kalo were the names by which he was known in his nobler young manhood, and Kokoa was his name to his followers, but he was ever after "Chief Maneater" to the Hawaiian world.

It was a wild and wonderfully beautiful spot that Kokoa chose for his final home. It was a small plateau or mesa of from two to three hundred acres on the top of a small mountain surrounded by other higher and more precipitous cliffs. It was luxuriantly covered with tropical growth and blessed with abundant rains. The Hawaiians have given the name Hale-manu, or "house of the hand," to this plateau. Its sides, sloping down into the valleys, were so precipitious as to be absolutely inaccessible. It could be entered only along a narrow ridge. The pandanus drooped its long leaves and aerial rootlets along the edges. The uluhi, or tangle-fern, massed and matted itself into a thick disguise for the cannibals' secret paths through the valleys below. Native flowers bordered the paths and crowned the plateaus as if man's worst nature could never wither the appeal of things beautiful. A magnificent koa, or native mahogany, tree spread its protecting branches by the spot chosen by Kokoa for his grass house. Kukui trees furnished their oily nuts for his torches. The ohia or native apple, and the breadfruit and wild sugar cane gave generously of their wealth to the support of the cannibal band. They easily cultivated taro—the universal native food—and captured birds and sometimes unwary hunters who penetrated the forest recesses in search of the birds with the rare yellow feathers. It was a beautiful den into which spider-like he dragged his victims.

Kokoa led his followers into the mountains through winding valleys and thick forests and sometimes in the very beds of the Waianae brooks to this secluded retreat lying within the walls of one of the enormous extinct craters of the volcanic mountains. As they entered the valley below the plateau, one of his followers said to another: "Our chief has found a true hiding place for us. Let us hope that it may not prove a trap. If our presence here should be known to the people of Waialua, they could easily close the entrance of this valley with a strong guard and drive us against the steep walls up which we cannot climb." Kokoa only called out, "Wait, I will protect you," then led them to the plateau he had selected.

The ascent to the summit was along a "knife-blade ridge" flanked by picturesque sides. For a long distance there was only room for one man to walk. One of the men carelessly hastened across this causeway bearing a heavy burden of goods and weapons. His foot slipped. His burden overbalanced him. The sloping side of the ridge was covered with grass which afforded no foothold. In a moment the fallen man and his burden were hurled down the slope. The terrified friends watched the flying body in its rapid descent and saw it shoot out in space over the edge of a lava cliff and heard it strike the broken debris at the foot.

Two of the men were at once sent back to skirt the cliff and secure the remains of their companion. The others followed Kokoa with more careful steps.

This hill, crowned by table land, which was to be their home, was apparently the very center of volcanic activity in former days. It had been the deposit of the last traces of the crater. Lava and ashes had been piled up and then when the fires died away, had been coated with the island plant life. Here they found a fortress that could not be assailed or approached except by one man at a time. From this place raids could be easily made upon the surrounding country. To this place they brought their captives for their inhuman feasts.

After the grass houses were built for permanent shelter, Kokoa, or "Ke-alii-ai Kanaka," caused a great hole to be made. This was the imu or oven in which the bodies of animals and men were to be baked. A fire was built in the bottom of the hole. Stones were placed upon the burning wood. When these stones were thoroughly heated and the fire had died away, the bodies were wrapped in fragrant and spicy leaves, laid upon the stones, and covered so that the heat might not escape. Then water was carefully poured down so that clouds of steam might make tender the flesh roasting over the heated stones. This was the ordinary Hawaiian method of preparing fish or chickens or animals for their numerous feasts. It was the regular festival preparation required by the cannibals.

After a time Kokoa and his companions took a huge outcropping block of lava, and smoothed away the top, making a hollow ipukai, or table dish, or, more literally, "a gravy dish," upon which their ghastly repasts were served. This stone table was finally rounded and its sides ornamented by rudely carved figures. This stone was five or six feet in circumference. Not far from it the chief's grass house was built and the ground prepared for the taro which should be their daily food.

Sometimes members of the little band carried birds which had been cunningly snared and exchanged them for fish and chickens with families living on the sea shore. Sometimes the entire band would make an attack upon a lonely household and carry every member of it to the mountain lair, that day after day they might be provided with such food as would satisfy the shameless craving of their gross appetites.

Sometimes the cannibal band met strong resistance, and with their captives carried back the dead bodies of their friends. Sometimes sickness and death crossed the narrow ridge and struck down some of Chief Maneater's followers, until at last Ke-alii-ai Kanaka stood alone by the ipukai.

Alone he watched for hunters and for those who came searching for rare plants or woods or birds. Alone he guarded his retreat on the table land. He did many daring deeds and terrified the people by his fabulous strength and courage.

One day he captured and killed a victim whom he carried through the forest to Halemanu.

A brother of this victim discovered and followed him to the path along the ridge. He recognized the chief who had been driven long before from Waialua. He knew the reputation for boxing and wrestling which belonged to his former leader. He went back to his village. For a year Hoahanau gave himself up to athletic training. He sought at the strong men—the boxers and wrestlers of Waialua. He visited other parts of the island until he found no one who could stand before him. Then, alone, he sought the hiding place of "Chief Maneater." He covered his lithe and sinewy body with oil that his enemy might not easily grasp an arm or limb. He reached the narrow pass leading to Halemanu.

His challenge rang out, and "Chief Maneater" came forth to meet him. The chief started along the narrow path swinging a heavy war club and flourishing a long spear.

Hoahanau made himself known and was recognized by the chief. Then Hoahanau made known the terms upon which he wished to wrestle with the chief.

"Take back your club and spear, and stand unarmed upon your ipukai, and I will also stand unarmed by your imu. No weapons shall be near our hands. Then will we wrestle for the mastery."

Ai-kanaka despised Hoahanau, whose strength he had well known in the past. He believed that he could easily overcome the daring man who stood naked before him; therefore, boastfully taunting Hoahanau and threatening to eat his body upon that very ipukai, he threw away his weapons and waited the onset.

As the combatants threw themselves against each other, Ai-kanaka was surprised to find his antagonist ready for every cunning feint and well-timed blow. It was a long and fearful struggle. The chief had been once thrown to the ground, but had twisted aside and regained his feet before Hoahanau could take advantage of the fall.

Foaming at the mouth and roaring and screaming like an enraged animal, Ai-kanaka turned for a second toward his house with the thought of rushing to secure a weapon. Then Hoahanau leaped upon him, caught him, and whirled him over the edge of the plateau. Down the chief swept, broken and mangled by the rough, sharp spurs of lava rock, until the lifeless body lodged in the branches of a tall ohia tree far below.

This was the beginning and ending of cannibalism in the Hawaiian Islands so far as history and definite legend are concerned. Halemanu was visited by Mathison, and a description of the carved stone table published in 1825.

In 1848 a little party of white men were guided to the crater by an old Hawaiian, who repeated to them the story of "Chief Maneater" substantially as it is given in this record. They found Halemanu. The foundations of the house or at least of a wall around it were easily traced. The ipukai and the imu were both there. The party did not notice any carved images on the side of the stone table. Indeed the stone had been so covered by decaying debris that it scarcely extended a foot above the soil.

In 1879, and in 1890, Mr. D. D. Baldwin, a member of the party visiting Halemanu in 1848, again sought the ipuwai without a guide, but the luxuriant growth of tangle-fern and grass made exploration difficult, and the carved stone table was not found. Somewhere under the debris of Halemanu it may wait the patient search of a Hawaiian achaeologist.

Mr. Joseph Emerson, who has had charge of governmental surveys of a large part of the islands and also is a prominent authority on Hawaiian matters, says that the sacrificial stone can still be found and was seen by his brother within the past few years. He differs from the other writers in the name given to the place and also in regard to the locality. The right name should be "Helemano," carrying the idea of a train of followers of some high chief. The locality is some miles northwest of the Waianae range in one of the valleys of the Koolau mountains. To this place the chiefesses of highest blood were wont to come for the birth of their expected children. The valley was "tabu" or "sacred." Near this sacred birthplace of chiefs was the home for a time of the noted man-eating chief.